

Regional Council Activity Report

February 1, 1999

Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



Executive Director's Report

The 1999 legislative session has begun, and once again it is crucial for us to work together to support bills that are in our interest and oppose those bills which seek to undermine our local authority. Of particular concern to the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is HB 2181, which calls for the creation of an Urban Planning Division within ADOT to develop a regional transportation plan. The intent of the bill is to reassign many of the transportation planning functions of MAG and give them to the state.

There are multiple issues with HB 2181 related to consistency with federal regulations and involvement of local decision makers in the transportation planning process. The legislation does not comply with federal law and would jeopardize federal transportation funds available to the region. It creates a duplicative planning process by establishing another level of bureaucracy within ADOT to duplicate work mandated to MAG, the MPO. And, it gives authority to the Urban Planning Division to set corridor priorities and change priorities for the urban area without consultation with local officials. I urge you to contact the lawmakers of your district and ask them to oppose this bill.

On a much more positive note, on January 8th we held our annual Regional Council Retreat at the Buttes in Tempe. After some very productive discussions, we made significant strides in identifying our goals for the coming year. Here are some of the highlights:

- ❖ **Executive Director's Report on 1998 Activities.** MAG continues to serve the region in a variety of important ways. At the retreat, I presented an overview of the numerous activities undertaken and accomplishments achieved during 1998. Copies of the report are available by contacting MAG.
- ❖ **Presentation of a Draft Strategic Communication Plan.** The Strategic Communication Plan has been developed to achieve a number of defined communication and agency objectives, encouraging broad-based support of MAG as the essential public partner in the regional

policymaking process. The plan outlines five key public communication goals and proposed strategies for reaching those goals. Discussion following a staff presentation centered on developing a systematic, proactive program for communicating with legislators who should be considered our “A” customers. The suggestion was made that MAG staff should brief mayors on legislative issues of importance to the region, and mayors and other members should work to educate lawmakers of the important role of the MAG Regional Council. It was also suggested that MAG should act as a regional convener of the public and private sector on strategic issues.

- ❖ **Regional Council Focus and Direction.** Of primary importance in these discussions was to develop a mechanism for more meaningful, early discussion and engagement by Regional Council members on issues prior to Regional Council vote. Among the suggestions was a recommendation that MAG staff brief Regional Council members by teleconference on the day prior to the Regional Council meeting.
- ❖ **Committee Structure.** A number of MAG committees have outgrown their utility. We presented a list of committees recommended for sunseting. Also, we suggested that, when appropriate, MAG create more open and informal issue-oriented forums in place of standing committees, to make more effective use of your time and to allow appropriate stakeholders to address specific issues.
- ❖ **Revenue Diversification.** As you know, MAG is heavily reliant on grant funding. We believe that to strengthen our fiscal position, we should consider ways of diversifying our revenue base. We presented a comparison of what other Councils of Government around the nation have done to achieve similar goals. Some potential options include establishing a Regional Training Academy; joint purchasing of energy; forming a property corporation; partnering with universities on training programs; partnering with ICMA for international capacity building and technology exchange; and establishing associate MAG memberships.
- ❖ **Work Program Priorities.** Discussions also included identifying work program priorities for the coming year. A full report has been provided to Council members.

We also discussed upcoming Census 2000 issues. With the help of your input, on Friday, January 29th, I testified before the Congressional Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. My testimony centered on four ways to improve the accuracy of census counts: accounting for new growth right up to the day of the Census, conducting a post-census local review, meeting all Census program deadlines, and designating a highly-visible Census 2000 advocate.



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Transportation Planning/Programming Update

Progress continues in the cooperative efforts between MAG and ADOT to develop the Five Year Highway Construction Program and the Tentative Life Cycle Program for the MAG Freeway Program, including completing the Regional Freeway System by the end of 2007. Discussions will conclude over the coming weeks. The Regional Council will be presented with a list of projects for MAG federal funds and a Draft Transportation Improvement Program at the Regional Council meeting in March.

For more information, contact Eric Anderson, MAG Freeway Program Manager, 470-1107.

Council Approves Short Range Transit Plan

The Short Range Transit Plan is prepared and updated annually by the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) for MAG. The plan's contents include an overview of the performance and operating characteristics of the public transit services provided in Maricopa County. The plan was approved unanimously by the Council.

For more information, contact Scott Miller, RPTA, 262-7242.

Council Accepts Fixed Guideway System and MIS Studies

In May, 1996, the MAG Regional Council approved the MAG Fixed Guideway System Study, as well as Major Investment Studies on two corridors within the region. The MIS studies recommended light rail transit for corridors that extend from Glendale to Phoenix and from Phoenix to the East Valley. The purpose of the System Study is to analyze high capacity public transportation options at the regional level. Recommendations of the study include a 39-mile light rail transit system focused on serving central activity centers; expansion of express bus service to connect outer urbanized areas to central activity centers; a tripling of local bus service throughout the urbanized area; major expansion of circulator service in core areas; commuter bus connections to outlying communities; improvements to bus stops; and tripling Dial-A-Ride service. The Council unanimously accepted the System Study, and approved the two MIS studies for inclusion in the 1999 Update of the MAG Long Range Transportation Plan.

For more information, contact Terry Johnson, MAG Transportation Manager, 254-6300.

Other Items

MAG is moving ahead with the first phase of its Teleconferencing and Telecommuting Program as approved by the Regional Council. In December, the Council approved the selection of Norstan Inc. to undertake the first phase of this program, a Videoconferencing Project. The project is also being guided by the MAG Telecommunications Advisory Group (MAGTAG). A letter has been forwarded to MAG managers requesting that they review their jurisdiction's representation on the MAGTAG and notify MAG of any additional individuals in their city who should be consulted for this needs assessment and implementation plan.

For more information, contact Rita Walton, MAG Policy and Information Manager, 254-6300.

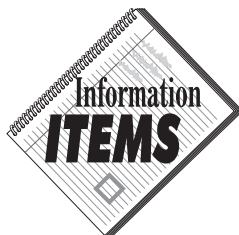


Upcoming Issues

Annual Report on MAG Freeway and Expressway Program

During the month of February, many important transportation events will occur. Along with two public transportation events (see Information Items, below), staff will present a fiscal analysis of the Life Cycle Program. In the "Annual Report on MAG Freeway and Expressway Program," we will report on anticipated freeway construction projects, their anticipated cost, and scheduled dates of completion.

For more information, contact Eric Anderson, MAG Freeway Program Manager, 470-1107.



Information Items

Transportation Group Recommends Projects Totaling \$2.3 Million

Bike, pedestrian and equestrian trails and murals on freeway underpasses are among the projects that are being recommended for funding by the Arizona Department of Transportation Enhancement Review Committee (TERC). Five Valley projects, submitted to the TERC by MAG, are among 26 statewide recommended by the TERC for funding by the State Transportation Board. The Valley projects competed against 93 others from around the state. The Board will vote on these projects at a meeting February 19th in Globe.

The five projects include: Chandler Paseo (top-ranked project in the state); West Valley Multi-modal Corridor; Phoenix Maricopa Freeway Enhancement;

Mesa Downtown Pedestrian Connection Phase I; and the Mesa Multi-Use Path. The projects under consideration would become the latest additions to over 27 funded Valley enhancement projects recommended by the Maricopa Association of Governments since 1992.

For more information, contact Kelly Taft, MAG Public Communications Program Manager, 452-5080.

MAG Hires New Attorney

As most of you know, LaMar Shelley of Shelley, Turley, Swan and Bethea has retired from full-time law practice after representing MAG on legal issues for more than 31 years. MAG is pleased to announce the hiring of the firm of Steptoe and Johnson as our new legal counsel. Barbara Goldberg, former Deputy City Attorney for the City of Scottsdale, will be our primary attorney. Along with her municipal experience, she brings to the table many years of expertise in water, environmental, natural resources, and legislative law.

For more information, contact James Bourey, MAG Executive Director, 254-6300.

MAG Hosts Legislative Luncheon

The Maricopa Association of Governments held an informal luncheon with state lawmakers February 1st. Participants included members of the Legislative Leadership, as well as Chairs and Vice Chairs of committees which deal with issues affecting MAG members. The session focused on mutual concerns for the 1999 session.

For more information, contact Carol Kratz, MAG Human Services Manager, 254-6300.



Upcoming Events

Transportation Events Provide Opportunity for Input

Citizens will have the opportunity to learn more about the region's transportation needs and plans, as well as the chance to provide their own input and ideas, at three special events scheduled for February 18th and 23rd. The events are sponsored by the Maricopa Association of Governments, the Arizona Department of Transportation, and the Regional Public Transportation Authority.

The first event is a Transportation Fair that will be held at Central Station, southeast corner of 1st Avenue and Van Buren from 3:30-5:30 p.m. Thursday, February 18th. The fair will have informative displays and staff members will be

available to answer questions and receive feedback. On Tuesday, February 23rd, MAG will host an Open House at 4:00 p.m., followed by a Public Hearing at 5:30 p.m. Information will focus on the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and MAG Freeway and Expressway Program.

For more information, contact John Farry, MAG Transportation Planning Program Manager, 254-6300.

Next Regional Council Meeting

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 24th, at 5:00 p.m. Agenda items will include the Annual Report on the MAG Freeway and Expressway Program, and a proposal for acceleration of the regional freeway system and other projects.

For more information, contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, 254-6300.